

At the Right Hand of God

Today is the last Sunday of the liturgical calendar. It is the Reign of Christ Sunday. Celebrating the Reign of Christ Sunday marks the end of Ordinary Time and serves as a prologue to the festivities of Advent. We celebrate Christ's role as Lord of all the world, the church, and our lives.

Reign of Christ or Christ the King Sunday is an opportunity to be reminded who is the one we have chosen to follow. It is an opportunity to give thanks for the author of salvation and the one who has given us the gift of the church, the fellowship of the body that we celebrate each time we gather in person or online. It is a time when we declare our ultimate allegiance not to a nation, not to an ideal or dream, but to a person. Our faith in its most basic form is about a relationship with this person Jesus, whom we call Christ, the Anointed, or the Messiah.

As a matter of quick review, from the time when God first spoke with Abraham and made certain promises to him until the time when the descendants of Abraham moved into the land that had been promised, God was the recognized leader. God worked through various people. First Moses then Joshua and various judges after Joshua.

In the book of Judges, we see various leaders who were tools in the hands of God. They helped to liberate the tribe or tribes from the oppression who tried to either enslave the children of Israel or to drive them out of the land.

During this time, we read about the children of Israel turning back to worshipping idols. No less than four times in the book of Judges we find the same phrase. That phrase in the last sentence in the book: **In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25 NASB)**

The mantra of Israel became "Give us a king." Let's look at this brief passage found in 1 Samuel the 8th chapter.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the matter was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people regarding all that they say to you, because they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them. (1 Samuel 8:4-7 NASB)

Up to that point, God was the king over His chosen people. The government was a theocracy. It was a country ruled by God. Now, the people rejected God as their king. We may sit here and smugly think that they were wrong and be happy that we aren't like them. However, when we look in the mirror of God's word, we find that we are just like them. We put our trust and look to human rulers to solve our problems and lead us to better times as defined by our idea of what those "better times" should be.

We similarly sit in disbelief that Jesus was rejected as the Messiah. How could the religious leaders not see the overwhelming evidence in prophecies that were fulfilled and the miracles that were performed for them to witness?

They were looking for a king like their ancestors. They wanted a king that would sit on the throne of David and lead an army to expel the Romans. Again, they failed to see that God was showing them a king. God reached out to restore the theocracy and the relationship that He once enjoyed with Abraham, Isaac, David and others.

What did Jesus do after His resurrection? We may remember bits and pieces of information about Thomas touching His wounds. We may remember some of the conversation on the road to Emmaus. We may recall His breakfast of fish with His disciples. This morning, we will examine some facts that will help us to know where Jesus is now and the importance of His location.

First, let's take a few minutes to review the record of the last few minutes of Jesus on earth. Matthew does not actually mention the ascension but tells us of the final charge Jesus gave to His disciples with these words: **And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."** (Matthew 28:18-20 NASB)

Luke speaks of the ascension twice. First, in his gospel account we read. And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. (Luke 24:50-51 NASB) Then, Luke wrote a short history about the beginning of the Christian age in the book of Acts. He starts at the ascension so we have another glimpse of that scene. **And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were watching, and a cloud took Him up, out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, then behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them, and they said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."** (Acts 1:9-11 NASB)

The oldest gospel gives only a one sentence account. We find this in Mark 16:19.

So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. (Mark 16:19 NASB)

Jesus sat at the right hand of God. This is significant. It is also the image described by the first Christian martyr Stephen as found in Act the 7th chapter. Stephen had told the crowd that they had killed all the prophets that God had sent to them. He told them that they had failed to observe the very law which they claimed to cherish. They were angry and began to stone Stephen. Stephen tells us what he saw as he looked up.

But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:55-56 NASB)

In the book of Ephesians, we have the significance of Jesus being on the right hand of God unfolded. In this passage, we see that the significance of Jesus being in authority is part of God’s plan that was in place before the foundation of this earth.

Let’s turn to the first chapter of Ephesians as we clearly see the regal picture of our king.

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. (Ephesians 1:3-4 NASB)

The foundation for all of our blessings is found only in Jesus Christ. Our blessings are spiritual in nature and extend to the heavenly realm. This is and has always been God’s plan and intent since before He framed the world. In this plan, we find that our relationship with God is much more personal than the typical image of a lord and servant.

In love He predestined us to adoption as sons *and daughters* through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He favored us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. (Ephesians 1:5-8 NASB)

God made us sons and daughters through an adoption process that is accomplished through Jesus Christ. This process of adoption carries the bonus of forgiveness of our sins. By grace we have all of this through the blood of Jesus. This is by the grace of God which **He lavished on us**. Paul is in prayer for the church in Ephesus asking God to allow them to see the fullness of what God has done for them through Jesus. He wants them to know what riches are theirs through their inheritance.

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe. (Ephesians 1:15-19 NASB)

All of the richness that is promised through Jesus is there for all of those who believe in Him (Jesus). Those riches are described as boundless. They are beyond our ability to comprehend. This is great news. But, what does this have to do with Jesus being at the right hand of God. Let’s read on in this first chapter of Ephesians.

***These are* (the riches we were speaking of earlier) in accordance with the working of the strength of His (God’s) might which He (God) brought about in Christ, when He (God) raised Him (Christ) from the dead and seated Him (Christ) at His (God’s) right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He (God) put all things in subjection under His (Christ) feet, and made Him (Christ) head over all things to the church, which is His (Christ) body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:19-23)**

Through Jesus the Christ, God has established a theocracy in which Jesus is the king. Jesus is seated at the right hand of God and has been given all authority. Through Him, by the grace of God, we may enjoy all of the spiritual blessings now and in the heavenly realm.

Are we in Christ? Are we serving our king? Do we know the **boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe?**